

SR 164 Corridor Study

Corridor Working Group Session

Meeting Summary

Meeting date: August 30, 2005

Location: Green River Community College – Enumclaw (1414 Griffin Avenue)

Attendees: ***Partners in attendance:***
Dennis Dowdy – City of Auburn
Steve Taylor – Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
Chris Searcy – City of Enumclaw
Mike Cummings – Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)
Ann Martin – King County
Seth Stark – WSDOT, Urban Planning Office
Ron Paananen – WSDOT, Northwest Region

Partners not in attendance:
None

Others in attendance:
Councilmember Rich Wagner – City of Auburn
Chris Picard, Nancy Boyd – WSDOT
Pamela Arora, Cathy Higley – Parsons
Kristine dos Remedios – EnviroIssues

Welcome and Goals for the Day Seth Stark, WSDOT, welcomed the partners and thanked them for taking the time to attend the Corridor Working Group (CWG) session. Seth also thanked Chris Searcy for hosting the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves and shared the name of the organization or jurisdiction they were representing.

Seth reviewed the session agenda. An email was sent to the partners the week prior that provided information from the CWG session on August 9, 2005 and information for today's meeting. The group will review the previous meeting summary, review the evaluation criteria that was finalized in February 2005, discuss the initial screening analysis results and talk about how the projects have been packaged for the second round of analysis.

Previous Meeting Summary At the CWG meeting on August 9, 2005, the project list was reviewed in preparation for the initial screening. The modeling work for the Auburn bypass options was discussed. WSDOT was asked to look at the "R" Street option as a half diamond instead of a full diamond interchange. The modeling results for this will be available in the next couple of weeks. A PowerPoint presentation was given at the last meeting on existing traffic and safety conditions and potential improvements. The presentation is available on WSDOT's FTP site sent to the partners.

Steve Taylor, Muckleshoot Tribe, asked why the modeling would be done as a half diamond instead of a full diamond. Seth explained that residents located on one side of the alignment make it prohibitive to build a complete diamond interchange. Dennis Dowdy, City of Auburn, agreed, saying that when the state studied the full diamond a number of years ago residents opposed the idea. The City of Auburn would oppose the idea of building a full diamond interchange.

Ann Martin, King County, asked if there was a need for more than a half diamond interchange. Seth explained that the traffic is mostly coming from the south. There is not as much need to have direct access from the north.

Review Evaluation Criteria

Seth handed out a copy of the evaluation criteria that was finalized by the group in February 2005. The criteria were divided into 44 metrics. Cathy Higley, Parsons, explained that of the 44 metrics, 20 measure the benefits or the extent to which a project satisfies the goals and objectives of the study. The remaining 24 metrics focus on the potential costs, either financially or in terms of impacts due to the project.

Seth pointed out that, in the evaluation criteria document, an asterisk marks the four criteria that were used during the initial screening or fatal flaw analysis. The four criteria include safety, natural environment, historical, architectural and cultural resources, and cost.

Seth then handed out a schematic map of the corridor by segment that shows the location of each project. Seth also distributed the environmental inventory map that was created based on the existing conditions report from Landau Associates, the environmental consultant for SR 164. This map was used to do the initial environmental screening. Seth asked the partners to review the maps and let the team know if something looks inaccurate, based on their local knowledge of the area.

Ann asked if any issues related to the criteria came up when they were used in the initial analysis. Cathy said that this would be discussed later in the meeting, particularly during the project packaging agenda item.

Initial Screening Analysis

Cathy explained the initial screening analysis work that had been completed to date. The team did a first cut of the projects based on the evaluation criteria identified as the "fatal flaw" criteria, including safety, historical, architectural and cultural resources, natural environment and project cost.

In regard to project cost, the team is not in a position to know the exact cost of each project. Based on the team's engineering experience, each project was labeled as a high, medium or low cost project. High cost projects were projects expected to cost more than \$3 million. Medium cost projects were projects expected to cost between \$1-3 million. Low cost projects were projects expected to cost less than \$1 million.

Ann asked if project cost was weighed against project benefit. For example, a project may be expensive but it has many positive benefits that offset the cost. Cathy explained that a higher level of analysis is needed to compare the costs and benefits.

For the other criteria, a negative (-), positive (+) or neutral (0) score was assigned to each metric. If a project received a neutral score, this does not mean that the project has no impact or no benefit. This score may indicate that more information is needed to make this determination. For example, information is still being gathered from the Muckleshoot Tribe on their cultural resource areas, so the impact is not yet known. Additionally, it may not be known if a project is in a culturally sensitive area until excavation begins.

Cathy explained that three separate team members scored each project for every metric in the initial screening. When scores were not in agreement, the team discussed the discrepancy and made a final decision on the rating, always leaning on the conservative side.

Chris Searcy, City of Enumclaw, asked if all projects were expected to meet design

standards. Seth said that it is assumed that all projects will be designed to standard. There is not enough time or budget to look into whether or not each project can be designed to standards and if so, how much it will cost. If the project is a project that has been done before, it will be up to design standards, and was given a positive score. If it is a new unique project, then that metric was given an unknown or neutral rating.

Nancy Boyd, WSDOT, pointed out that for some projects, pedestrian safety is given a neutral rating, such as project 34 on page 9, which will obviously have positive benefits for pedestrian safety and should have received a positive rating instead.

Ann asked why maintenance projects were included in the project list and as a result, will be included in the corridor plan. Can the team generally state in the corridor plan that maintenance activities should be funded to improve safety, instead of listing each necessary maintenance project? There are projects here that will be seeking millions of dollars for re-alignment work, why are we concerned with a few hundred or thousand dollars to clear shrubbery. Cathy agreed that the breadth of the projects made them difficult to compare. Chris Picard, WSDOT, agreed that this can be confusing, but if a maintenance project helps to address safety along a high accident corridor, then it should be on the project list. Funds may need to be spent to maintain vegetation outside of the state right of way.

Cathy explained that some projects on page 6 of the Initial Screening handout had cross-hatching through them. The team recommends that these projects be dropped from the project list, based on the recognition that there will be significant cultural environmental impacts due to these projects. This recommendation is also based on the initial modeling results on how these Auburn Bypass option projects will benefit the SR 164 corridor. These projects did not perform as well as the other Auburn bypass options. Cathy also recommended that all other projects be carried forward for more in depth screening.

Councilmember Rich Wagner, City of Auburn, asked that project 1f, which was recommended for removal, be carried through the in depth screening. Project 1f has been the route discussed to link to the Black Diamond interchange for years. The in depth screening will allow those who have advocated for this route to know once and for all whether or not this is a feasible route. The partners agreed to this change.

Seth asked for any additional comments on the analysis by September 10, 2005.

Project Packaging

Cathy explained that the Improvement Packages and Potential Transportation Project handout shows where the team is right now. In order to review the projects in a logical way, they were separated into the short-term or long-term packages of improvements for the SR 164 corridor. The short-term package addresses existing deficiencies along SR 164, particularly high accident corridors (HACs) and high accident locations (HALs). The long-term projects address forecasted deficiencies along SR 164 within the next 25-30 years, or projects with a scope that are so large that they will likely not be implemented within the next 6 to 10 years. The projects will then move through the detailed screening and be reviewed to make sure projects do not compete with each other or address the same safety or congestion issues.

Based on this analysis, projects will then be sorted into three possible categories:

- Projects that cost considerably more than the benefits and are recommended for removal,
- Projects that cost considerably lower than the benefits and are recommended for inclusion in the final RDP, and

- And possibly, projects where the cost and benefits are balanced and require further discussion.

If a project is balanced in terms of its costs and benefits, the project team will discuss this with the partners at the next CWG meeting in order to decide if the project should be included in the final RDP.

The project team then solicited comments from the partners on how the projects were separated into the two packages:

- Ann Martin asked if a project is determined to be a high cost project, if the project can be phased into less-expensive and smaller scoped projects and completed in the short-term. It was recommended that projects be separated out into phased projects in order to address immediate safety and congestion issues in the short-term.
- One partner noted that project #20 on page 7 does not look like a high cost or long-term improvement. The team said that the project was along a 10-mile segment and was labeled a long-term project as a result. The strategy should be split into multiple projects to address alignment issues in the long-term and maintenance actions in the short-term.
- Dennis Dowdy noted that project #18 is a subset of project #20 and should be differentiated.
- Steve Taylor noted that the tribe is working with WSDOT on a lighting project from 368th to 408th, and should be added to the project list.
- Ann Martin asked how the project team was going to take this list of projects and put the RDP together so it makes sense as a corridor wide plan. The team responded by reminding the group that this is not a traditional urban corridor analysis. The SR 164 RDP will call out a series of projects that will address short-term and long-term needs along the corridor. These projects will address areas along the corridor that are deficient now, and areas that will likely be deficient in the future, based on the project modeling work.
- Ann Martin asked how the project team is going to address the issue of speed limits in the RDP. There were a lot of public comments made on reducing speed in relation to safety and the final document should address this issue. Explaining the process for how speed limits are changed may be the most appropriate way for addressing this issue.
- Ann Martin asked if the projects are going to be graphically displayed for the public or at least the CWG at some point. A graphic to show what the corridor would look like if all the short-term improvements were implemented and then another graphic to show what the corridor would look like if all long-term improvements were implemented would be helpful.
- Dennis Dowdy said that modeling of the bypass is necessary to identify where widening of SR 164 though Auburn and beyond is necessary. Some projects, once implemented, may erase the need for other projects, or diminish the scope of a project. Steve Taylor asked what was learned by the ITS recently activated through Auburn, when observed during a recent concert event. Dennis said that the traffic was flowing fine until a driver wanted to turn left of a bus stopped to let passengers on and off. These delays caused the traffic to backup all the way though SR 18 to I-5. Traffic flow is fine after the Academy area, because there is little friction from traffic entering and exiting the roadway. Providing at least an additional lane for turning movements may reduce this friction.

- One partner said that project #66 might need to be extended. Project #12 may be a part of project #66.
- Dennis Dowdy noted that project #25 does not address bus pullout problems from Dogwood to 32nd. He wanted to know if these were addressed somewhere else. Seth said that the team received a list of transit sites or bus stops that were identified by Metro as sites where a bus pullout or transit improvement would be the most beneficial. The team can go back and check this to see if any sites from Dogwood to 32nd were included.
- Ann Martin asked that the project team consider projects that help enhance existing demand management programs. If a few more feet of right of way would help HOVs or shuttles get in and out of events faster, this may be a logical investment to make. Roads should not be designed around the amphitheatre needs, but we can incorporate small things into projects we are already planning that may help.

Seth asked for any additional comments on the project packages by September 10, 2005.

New Open House Sites and Times

Seth noted that the final SR 164 open house dates and times are now set. All of the open houses were changed to 6:00pm – 8:00 pm, to make the event times consistent. The SR 167 and HOT lanes projects will also provide information at the Auburn open house. The partners will again be expected to attend to support the project team and to be present to answer the public's questions. The final SR 164 open house sites and times are as follows:

- Auburn - Chinook Elementary School (October 4th, 6-8pm)
- Muckleshoot Reservation - Philip Starr Center (October 6th, 6-8pm)
- Enumclaw - Thunder Mountain Middle School (October 11th, 6-8pm)

Update on Academy Drive Geotechnical Evaluation

Dennis Dowdy, City of Auburn, distributed a briefing paper issued by the City of Auburn on their efforts to investigate reopening Academy Drive. The City did a geotechnical evaluation of three different alternatives for reopening this historic roadway. It was found that stable ground was 20-30 feet below the surface in some areas, making reopening Academy Drive cost prohibitive in the near-term.

Two of WSDOTs geotechnical staff analyzed the report provided by the City's geotechnical consultant to get an indication of the cost, at a planning level, to fix the worst slip area, which is 100 feet in length and 20-25 feet deep in some areas. It was determined that this would be a \$5-6 million fix.

Other alternatives, which avoid the worst slip zone, required a significant amount of excavation. They were also expensive and in the \$5-6 million range.

The WSDOT geotechnical staff also described a method of using lightweight materials to fix the unstable slopes in order to open Academy Drive for emergency access only. This would cost \$500,000 to fix one deep slip spot and is an option that would require maintenance.

The partners asked how this briefing paper would be used. Dennis said that the paper is ready for immediate release. The report supports the City's position that it is not able to reopen Academy Drive in the near future, due to the cost.

Next Steps**Action Items:**

- Return to the CWG meeting in September with a graphic representation of projects that survive the detailed screening.
- Perform detailed screening and recommend projects for removal from or inclusion in the RDP and projects that need further discussion.
- Dennis Dowdy and Rich Wagner suggested that Craig Shumaker be contacted directly to spread the word about the open house events again.

Upcoming Meetings

- CWG Meeting: September 27, 2005 from 1:00pm – 4:00pm (Auburn City Council Chambers)
- SR 164 open houses:
 - Auburn - Chinook Elementary School (October 4th, 6-8pm)
 - Muckleshoot Reservation - Philip Starr Center (October 6th, 6-8pm)
 - Enumclaw - Thunder Mountain Middle School (October 11th, 6-8pm)

Handouts

- CWG Session Agenda
- SR 164 Project Location Maps by Segment
- SR 164 Existing Conditions Maps
- SR 164 Evaluation Criteria Technical Memorandum
- SR 164 Initial Screening of Short-term and Long-term Potential Transportation Projects
- SR 164 Corridor Improvement Packages and Potential Transportation Projects

**Handout by
Dennis Dowdy**

- City of Auburn Briefing Paper on Reopening Academy Drive